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Text as prepared for: Midwest States Risk Assessment Symposium

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(Text does not include verbatim comments)

Introduction

- Thank you for coming to Indianapolis for the first annual Midwestern States Risk Assessment Symposium.
- We are thrilled to play host to what has the potential to be an event that helps shape the future of risk-based decision making in environmental clean-up.
- And this wouldn't be possible without our co-sponsors, whom I would like to acknowledge:
 - Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs,
 - Purdue University Center for Environmental Science and Engineering,
 - Rose-Hulman Ventures and
 - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Thank you to all of you.
- We are so pleased to have all of our guests here today. I hope everyone will take the opportunity while in Indiana to experience our Hoosier Hospitality.
- I am confident and it is my sincere hope that the knowledge, information and insight you gain here in Indianapolis will be of tremendous value.
- I hope you all are well rested and well fed, because we have a lot of work to do here within the next three days.

Risk Assessment as a changing science

- Over the past several years, there has been a national move toward risk-based decision making in environmental programs
- For example, in 1998 the American Society for Testing Materials developed and implemented a Risk Based Corrective Action standard (generally referred to as Rebecca) which outlines an approach to assessing the risks from petroleum releases.
- Nearly all states have implemented risk-based programs within the last 10 years, including Indiana.

- Here at the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, we began developing our risk document in 1994 and utilize this model in several areas of land cleanup, including leaking underground storage tanks, brownfields, State Cleanup sites and Voluntary Cleanup sites.
- But Risk Assessment is a developing science, which is in its infancy and has many gaps that need to be filled, many questions that need answers.
- The science is constantly changing. Each new bit of toxicological information is a bittersweet victory.
- Good because it expands our knowledge base, but the pace of change makes it difficult to develop appropriate applications in a timely fashion.

Topics for discussion

- Nowhere is this more evident than in the topics you will be exploring during discussion panels.

Judgmental Sampling

- Judgmental sampling – when samples are taken based on the scientist's estimate of the contaminant's boundaries – is an area with very little guidance.
- Results are influenced largely by educated guesswork on the part of the individual taking the samples. Information gathered can vary greatly, depending on education and experience of the person developing the sampling plan.
- Our goal is to develop a decision tree that will provide clear guidance on how much sampling is enough to make sound technical decisions on the characteristics and extent of a contaminated area. Thus eliminating the expense of extraneous sampling and the flip, the frustration of inadequate sampling.

Vapor Intrusion

- Vapor intrusion is a complex issue that has received significant attention recently, both in the media and among our colleagues.
- Currently, there is no consensus on the appropriate policies and procedures for evaluating and assessing vapor intrusions.
- It is my hope that this symposium will also help further the national dialogue moving toward consistent and generally accepted solutions to these problems.

Hydrocarbons

- Our third major topic is residual hydrocarbons in soil. My state, for instance, is dealing with literally thousands of these sites.
- The sheer magnitude of the number of sites is overwhelming and the limited amount of toxicological data available compounds the magnitude of our task.
- Another issue with hydrocarbons is that the older policies dealing with residual hydrocarbons – especially diesel fuels – can be expensive to implement.
- We owe it to the regulated community and those whose health has the potential to be affected to take a closer look at toxicology and clean-up issues surrounding hydrocarbons.
- Working together will allow the development of procedures that are reasonable and implementable, yet protective of human health and the environment.

Why it is important to exchange ideas

- It is this science's changing nature that makes it important to hold events, such as this symposium, where the best minds can share and discuss current information and develop future applications for the science.
- This "meeting of the minds" is critically important to keep all of our edges sharp and to ensure that we are ahead of the wave because, as you all know, if you pause for even a moment, you may be swept under.
- By creating a forum in which people with diverse responsibilities and backgrounds can have an exchange of thought, it becomes possible to meld many ideas into scientifically sound and implementable policy.
- I am excited about the diverse group we have assembled today – both the panelists and guests.
- It is this diversity that, I am confident, will serve as the impetus for discovery.
- We have with us today pioneers in the field who have already made tremendous contributions as well as students whose fresh ideas and new perspectives will no doubt be an invaluable asset both during the symposium and in future years.
- We have professors and students who study toxicology and the contractors and staff who apply that knowledge in the field every day.
- We have those from the regulated community – manufacturers and consultants – whose businesses are directly affected by risk science.
- Together, right here, right now, we can make a sizable difference.

Practical value to the symposium

- This is not a statement of vague acknowledgment of some possible reverberation of our decisions and discussions throughout the next three days.
- I mean right here. Right now.
- What makes this symposium unique is its structure and purpose.
- The presentations made, the modeling defined will be considered in developing and updating risk assessment policies relative to remediation.
- My ultimate goal is for us to be able to directly translate the information gathered here into workable policies for Indiana and beyond, laying a foundation that we can build on for years to come. I think it can happen.
- It is a rare and exciting thing to be able to offer everyone who has the potential to be affected by a policy the chance to participate in its formation.
- This symposium is that potential.
- It is the potential to find answers to scientific questions asked only minutes ago.
- It is the potential to take existing information and a wide variety of perspectives and formulate sound public policy.

Conclusion

- What I hope we launch today from this symposium is a better understanding how we as environmental officials from across Indiana, the Midwest and the World begin to flesh out new, improved and more comprehensive risk assessment policies.
- If we pool our resources, our talent and our experience to fashion an improved risk assessment policy, it will be to the benefit of our constituents . . . the people we seek to protect from environmental threats.
- I have reviewed your agenda for the symposium and I think it offers a lot of food for thought for all of us to contemplate, consider and act upon. We can call upon existing science as a guide, but I would remind you that what we begin here today could stake out public risk assessment policies for years to come.
- I wish you well in your discussions and on that note, I will leave you to your work.
- Thank you.

